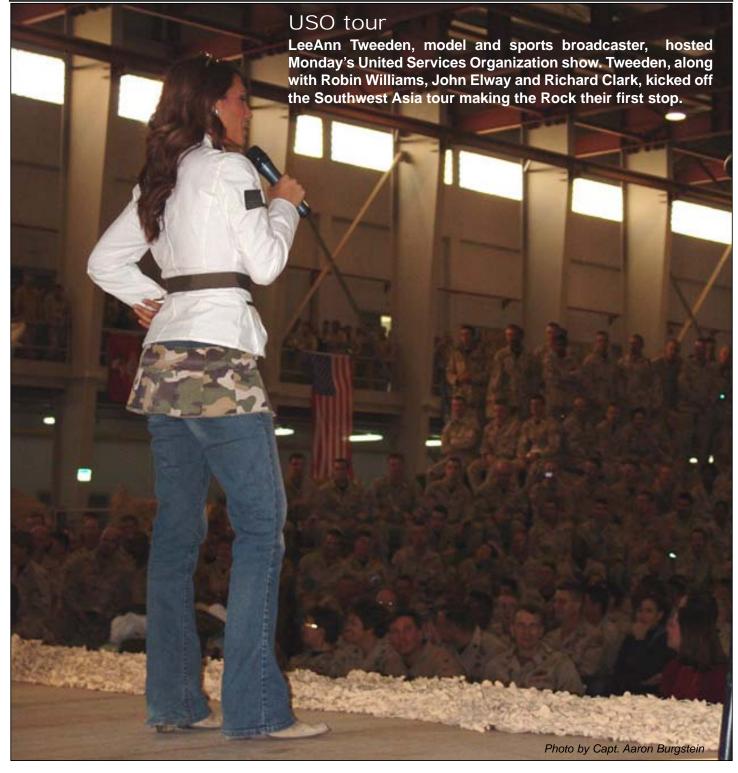
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386th Air Expeditionary Wing, The Rock

**December 17, 2004** 





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The 386th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs staff prepares all editorial content for the "Rock Slate." The editor will edit or re-write material for clarity, brevity or to conform with the Associated Press Style Guide, local policy and Air Force style as required by Air Force Instruction 35-101.

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Contributions for the "Rock Slate" can be made directly to the 386th AEW Public Affairs Office.

Submit contributions by 4 p.m. Thursday, one week prior to publication.



# Holidays away from home

#### By Chaplain (Maj.) Samuel Rorer

386th AEW Chaplain

Christmas comes but once a year, and this year it comes to us in a land very far away from home. While we might sing about and dream of "a white Christmas" the blowing desert sands and flapping canvas tents are constant reminders that we are deployed this Christmas season.

The sounds of aircraft launching day and night stand in stark contrast to our mind's vision of the angels hovering above.

This Christmas we will hear the story very differently of the Heavenly Host singing of peace on earth and good will towards all.

As we hear the Christmas story this year, we will at the same time remain fully engaged in our nation's war against the forces of terror and evil in our world. Yes, this year, Christmas will come to us in a land very far away from home.

America is made strong and our families are safer because of our sacrifice to spend Christmas in this place. We are a part of our nation's history. What we are doing here is noble; we are helping to make our nation a safer and better place. One day, we pray, there will truly be

peace on earth and good will towards all. Until that day, it will require the noble sacrifice of those brave enough to answer the call and pay the price for peace. It is our turn now in history to spend Christmas in a land far away from home.

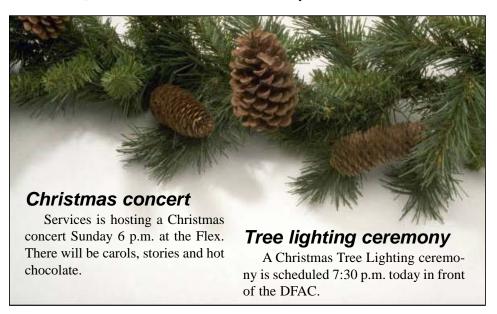
As Christmas comes to each one of you here this year, I would like to invite you to take the time to remember some of your religious and family traditions.

For most of us, Christmas is a time filled with special meaning and many wonderful family traditions. Share part of the story of your rich heritage with someone else and then take the time to ask them about theirs.

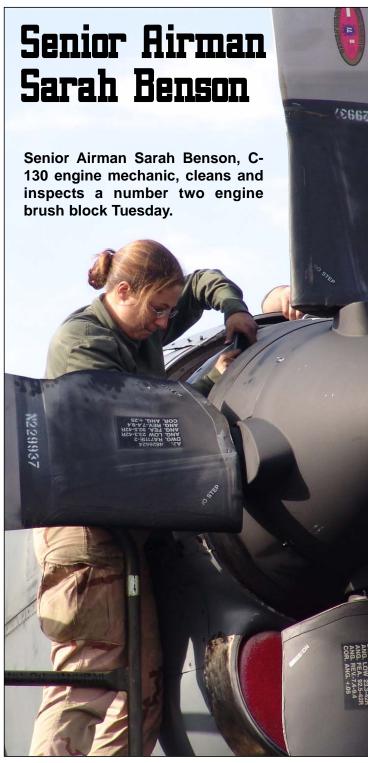
Watch out for those that seem the loneliest or most homesick – reach out to them and share the true spirit of Christmas with them. You can be certain that both of you both will receive a blessing.

Here at the Rock we will not forget that it is Christmas time. Maybe we won't be able to replicate all of those traditions of your heritage; but we will celebrate.

We will celebrate Christmas together as those who answered freedom's call. Let us continue to always pray for Peace on Earth. Merry Christmas to you and all your loved ones!









Photos by Senior Airman Nicole Spence

Airman Benson, works on a number two engine brush block on an EC-130 aircraft.

**Unit:** 43rd Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron

**Job:** C-130 engine mechanic

**Home Unit/Base:** Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Tucson, Ariz.

### How do you support the mission here?

I inspect, test, troubleshoot and repair the aircraft engines and propellers to ensure they are fully operational and safe for flight.

How many times have you deployed to the AOR and what makes this one unique?

This is my first deployment. It has been unique for me because I have had an opportunity to meet many C-130 maintainers from all over the world and to see the different kinds of C-130s first-hand.

## What will make this deployment memorable?

While deployed if one aircraft specialty has a job to be done, all aircraft specialists work together to make the aircraft fully mission capable. There is also a greater sense of accomplishment in knowing we are performing real world missions and supporting the ground troops.

# Holiday voice greetings now availible

by Tech. Sgt. David Jablonski

Air Force Print News

Deployed Airmen can now receive holiday-season voice greetings from family and friends via the Internet.

Offered through the Air Force Crossroads Web site and the Air Force's GIMail service, the program allows friends and family members of deployed Airmen to pick up a telephone, dial a toll-free number and send a voice recording via e-mail.

This service is available through Jan. 5.

"This allows many (Airmen) who may not otherwise be able to hear the voices of their loved ones to actually listen to their spouse, children, relatives and friends express their holiday ... wishes," said Barbara Murray, Air Force force sustainment chief.

To receive the messages, deployed Airmen must have, or sign up for a GIMail account. They enroll for voice mail by clicking on Air Force Holiday Voice Mail links within Air Force Crossroads and entering their GIMail password. At that point, a special code is generated for each enrolling Airman, and an e-mail notice containing the toll-free telephone numbers and the code is sent to the family members and friends they have specified.

To send the messages, people use the code for the specific deployed Airman. After they dial the toll-free number, they provide the code and begin their message.

Once a recording is made, it is sent via GIMail as an attached file. The file can be downloaded for later playback, allowing recipients to hear the messages as many times as they desire.

GIMail, www.afcrossroads.com/communications/index .cfm, is sponsored by the U.S. Air Force and is accessible from any computer that has Internet access. This includes all servicemembers, civil service employees, reservists and guardsmen, retirees and authorized family members. There are currently more than 80,000 registered users.



# GI Mail proves useful backup

For those interested in skipping the line at the Oasis to use your commercial Web mail, there is an answer. Get a Global Internet Mail (GI Mail) account at https://www.gimail.af.mil/.

GI Mail is an Air Force e-mail service specially designed to provide reasonable security and light bandwidth impact. It is provided to all Airmen and has been extended to all the Department of Defense.

A GI Mail account serves as a great backup mail account when on the road or when local e-mail accounts are otherwise inaccessible.

For questions, see the GI Mail FAQ page at https://www.gimail.af .mil/crossroads/faqs.htm.

If you have problems accessing the site, contact the Help Desk at 442-2666.

(Courtesy of the 386th Expeditionary Communication Squadron)

# TSP: Catch-up contributions start for 2005

The Air Force Personnel Center's Benefits and Entitlements Service Team automated systems will be available for 2005 Thrift Savings Plan catch-up contribution enrollments began Sunday.

"TSP catch-up contributions are additional tax-deferred contributions, separate from regular TSP contributions," said Ms. Janet Thomas, a human resources specialist at Air Force Personnel Center.

"To be eligible for catch-up contributions, employees must be age 50 or older in the year in which the first deduction from pay occurs, be in a pay status, be making regular TSP contributions at either the maximum TSP percentage or a dollar amount that will result in reaching the IRS annual elective deferral limit by the end of the year.

"They also must not be in the six-month non-contribution period following a financial hardship in-service withdrawal," Ms. Thomas added. Employees contributing to other eligible tax-deferred retirement programs, such as a 401k, need to be aware that the IRS annual elective deferral limit applies to the total contributed to all eligible tax-deferred retirement savings plans.

Catch-up contributions have their own IRS annual limit that is separate from the annual limit for regular TSP contributions. The maximum catch-up contribution for 2005 is \$4,000; while the IRS annual elective deferral limit for "regular" TSP contributions will be \$14,000.

There is no "open season" applicable to TSP catch-up contributions, so eligible employees may start, change, stop or restart catch-up contributions at any time. For calendar year

2005, the BEST automated Web and phone system will accept catch-up contribution enrollments began Sunday.

Enrollments submitted between Sunday through Dec. 25 will be effective Dec. 26, with the first contribution deducted from their Jan. 14 pay. Subsequent enrollments will be effective at the beginning of the next pay period.

When making their contribution election, employees need to designate a whole-dollar amount they wish to contribute each pay day rather than the annual maximum of \$4,000.

Eligible Air Force-serviced civilian employees may enroll for catch-up contributions via the Employee Benefits Information System Web application or the BEST phone system. EBIS is available on the Web at www.afpc.randolph.af .mil/dpc/BEST\_GRB/EBIS.htm or through the AF Portal at www.my.af.mil.

Employees may reach the BEST phone system by calling 1-800-616-3775 (press 2 for Air Force-serviced civilian employee, then 2 again for BEST benefits and entitlements, and follow the prompts).

Overseas employees need to dial a toll-free AT&T direct access number for the country they are located in, then 800-997-2378. The numbers can be found at www.att.com/business\_traveler/guides\_and\_access/dialing\_instr.html#outside.

Additional information on the TSP Catch-Up contribution program is available on the BEST Web site at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/menu.htm under "Thrift Savings Plan," and the TSP Web site at www.tsp.gov.

(Courtesy of the Air Force Personnel Center)

### Program seeks applicants

The Air Force is encouraging Airmen to apply for the President's Commission on White House Fellowships. Applicants must obtain written endorsement and authorization from their commander.

Founded in 1964, the White House Fellows Program is one of America's most prestigious programs for leadership and public service.

There are no restrictions for age, sex, race or physical requirements. It provides first-hand experience in how the government operates.

Up to 19 people are selected each year to work full-time for one year as special assistants to senior executives in cabinet-level agencies or in the executive office of the president. Military personnel are particularly encouraged to apply since the program does enhance executive development.

Applicants must also meet the following criteria:

- \* Have 24 months time on station as of Aug. 1, 2005, or be returning from an overseas assignment from July 1 Aug. 31
- \* Have sufficient retainability to serve a three-year active-duty service commitment upon completion of the program as well

\* Be available for reassignment. For more information, interested Airmen can contact the local military personnel flight, visit http://www.whitehouse.gov/fellows/, or call (202) 395-4522.

# Awards at the Rock

#### EOC exams

The following Airman recieved a score of 90 percent or better on the end of course exam this week:

- ✓ Airman 1st Class Jason Utt: 98
- ✓ Airman 1st Class Sean Rutledge: 98
- ✓ Staff Sgt. Charles Clawson: 97
- ☑ Airman 1st Class Jacob Watson: 96
- ✓ Airman 1st Class Chris Cirone: 95
- ☑ Airman 1st Class Erik Kishlicky: 95
- ✓ Airman 1st Class Christopher Gerdes: 94
  - ✓ Senior Airman Benjamin Rolph: 94
  - ✓ Senior Airman Timmi Bjorsvik: 93
  - ☑ Airman 1st Class John Ehle: 92

# Airmen face retraining

Many Airmen have taken their careers in their own hands by volunteering to change career fields or separate under the initial phase of the Air Force's FY05 Noncommissioned Officer Retraining Program.

In Phase I of the program, Air Force officials notified more than 3,000 Airmen selected as vulnerable to retrain and asked them to submit their choices of shortage career fields they would most like to retrain into.

As part of NCORP Phase II, 668 active-duty Airmen have been targeted for involuntary retraining into another Air Force specialty chosen for them by the Air Force Personnel Center enlisted retraining staff here. Phase II began Dec. 2 and will run through Feb. 28.

"This phase of the retraining program is necessary to help meet the needs of the Air Force by putting Airmen where they are needed most," said Tech. Sgt. Catina Johnson-Roscoe, NCOIC of Air Force Enlisted Retraining.

"The retraining program is designed to help balance the enlisted force by moving NCOs in specialties with surpluses to those with shortages," said Chief Master Sgt. Terrence Reed, chief of AFPC's Skills Management Branch.

"We will work with those Airmen who are selected for retraining, as we would any retraining case, in order to make the transition as smooth as possible for the Airman and his or her family while still meeting the needs of the Air Force," said Sergeant Johnson-Roscoe.

Vulnerability listings by grade and Air Force Specialty Code are posted on the Web and will be updated weekly on the Air Force Personnel Center's Web site at https://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/enl-skills/Retraining/retraining.htm.

Anyone interested in more details about the program can contact the local military personnel flight. (Courtesy of Air Force Personnel Center)



Photo by Capt. Aaron Burgstein

#### Holiday rush

(From right) Staff Sgts. Harvey Munoz and John Autry, both 386th Expeditionary Communication Squadron, sort incoming mail with volunteers Thursday. Since Thanksgiving, nearly 100,000 pounds of incoming mail has passed through the post office.

## Airmen carry over 'use or lose' leave

Amid deployments, servicemembers may now carry over 120 days of leave

Active-duty Airmen who were unable to take leave because they supported contingency operations may be allowed to accumulate more than the normal 60 days after the fiscal year ends.

Those affected can retain up to 120 days of leave until Sept. 30, 2005, said

Air Force Personnel Center officials here.

"This program is meant to enable people to take leave they've earned," said Senior Master Sgt. Don Taylor, the center's customer support operations superintendent.

The carry-over leave must be taken in 2005 so Airmen do not lose leave next year, he said.

For more information, Airmen can contact their local military personnel flight. (Courtesy of AFPC News Service)



#### By Senior Airman Nicole Spence

386th AEW Public Affairs

Viper Flight – the group is as tough as the name suggests. Whether it's scoping out threats or chasing down the enemy, this security forces' flight is the first line of defense entrusted to aggressively dominate the base's outer perimeter.

With only 30 members, this defense force provides 24 hour steadfast coverage of roughly 120 square miles.

Viper Flight is a small section of the 386th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. Each member of the flight is hand picked, selected to become a part of the tight knit team.

"Since the flight is so small, they know the ins and outs of each other. That's extremely important – knowing what your teammate is going to do and how he will react when responding to hostile incidents," said 1st Lt. Mike Gallucci, Viper Flight commander and off-base patrolmaster. "The camaraderie, cohesion and team unity sets them apart and exceeds that of any other flight."

And not just during duty hours either – after a 14 hour plus shift these members can still be found at the gym or eating together. It's also common for troops to come in on their days off to assist with exercise scenarios and help with the flight's training.

"I love everything about (Viper Flight), especially the companionship. It's like a brotherhood within the flight. We joke together and work together," said Airman 1st Class Brian Corso, Viper Flight dayshift.

Being able to read and know the people you work with is vitally important when split second decisions and defending people's lives are part of your everyday routine.

"We see a lot of stuff out here. Often

Photo by Senior Airman Nicole Spence times we are the first responders to major vehicle accidents. It's hard. You have to be careful and make the right decisions in a short amount of time," said Airman Corso.

Along with precision and the ability to quickly react, this elite group requires training in a variety of skills – anything from vehicle chases, heavy weapons, maps, and compasses to the low crawl.

"Being in the Viper Flight gives you the chance to use everything we were trained for, and uses you to your full capability," said Airman Corso. "It lets me defend the place I live, which is the most important thing. I know I've done my job when everyone can safely sleep and go to work the next day."

Being part of the Viper Flight also requires working with outside base agencies, local military and the Army.

See 'VIPER' Page 8

#### 'VIPER' from Page 7

With a major convoy route running through their patrol area, Viper members often work with the Army to ensure the convoys keep moving.

Vipers also work with local nationals and therefore have a good Arabic vocabulary to help bridge the host nation communication barrier.

"We have over 100 Bedouin camps in our patrol area. So we spend a lot of time talking with members of the local community as well as camel or sheep herders and hunters," said Lieutenant Gallucci.

With a job that is anything but routine, what makes it all fit together and run smoothly? According to Airman Corso it's the leadership.

"In order to have a good flight you need good flight leadership; it's the key to success. It has to combine just right to make a team. Ours works because we mix so well."

The closeness and dedication of this small flight form this base's solid off-base defense.

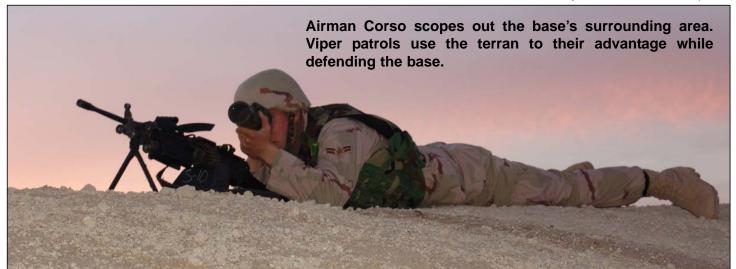
"We started out as a motivated team three months ago, and at the halfway point in our deployment we have molded into a family," said Lieutenant Gallucci.



Airman Jensen verifies the location of a convoy passing through the Viper zone as Tech. Sgt. David Bailey, 386th ESFS Viper Flight, relays information from the convoy commander.



Photos by Senior Airman Nicole Spence



## One stop shopping:

# Airlift agencies work together

By Capt. Aaron Burgstein

386th AEW Public Affairs

When aircrews need anything from the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, they need to look in just one place: the combined Command Post, Air Transportation Operations Center and Maintenance Operations Control Center.

The three agencies, collectively responsible for everything having to do with airlift into and out of this base, were located in three different areas before this rotation. On a daily basis a flurry of phone calls passed between the agencies to coordinate cargo and passenger loading, aircraft maintenance and inbound and outbound aircraft. That all changed with AEF 1/2.

"It's all about a quicker turn-around and more accurate information," said 2nd Lt. Douglas Todd, officer-in-charge of the ATOC, which is responsible for all aerial port activities such as the planning, packing and loading of all cargo and passengers. "Before, we had four or five people in the communications chain. By working together we've cut all that out."

The move combined the three agencies into one location.



Photo by Capt. Aaron Burgstein

Master Sgt. Michael Dougherty, 386th Maintenance Operations Control Center controller, updates a board listing aircraft and their maintenance status. Prior to this, the command post first received the messages and then had to pass them along via phone lines, which could sometimes result in delays or less than clear communications.

"If we got a busy signal and something else came up it could cause us to not get them the info, said Master Sgt. Lori Farrell, superintendent of the command post, which acts as the focal point of all base operations. "A 15-minute warning call could turn into a two minute warning. That made the aircraft, passengers and cargo sit out there."

Now, when a call comes in from an aircraft, all three get the word at the same time.

"They're hearing the crews the same time we are," continued Sergeant Farrell. "It's simultaneous. If there is a maintenance problem, the MOCC hears exactly what it is while ATOC knows exactly what the passengers and cargo are, which gets things rolling a lot faster."

"When crews call in maintenance write-ups they oftentimes use nicknames," said Master Sgt. Charles Jones, senior controller at the MOCC, which coordinates needed aircraft maintenance on the field and ensures there are aircraft available to complete the mission. "We (in maintenance) use those names all the time, but the people receiving the radio call might not know what they mean. By hearing it on the radio we know right away what has to be done."

"Our situational awareness has grown tremendously," said Sergeant Farrell. "We understand more and more about what ATOC and MOCC do. They (MOCC) can tell us what is wrong in layman's terms instead of the technical terms the aircrew gives us, which helps us react faster."

The controllers are not the only ones reaping the benefits however.

"We're one stop shopping for aircrews," said Sergeant Jones.

"A pilot, flight engineer and loadmaster can all come in together," said Lieutenant Todd. "The pilot goes to the command post, the engineer to MOCC and the loadmaster to ATOC."

"It saves them a lot of time," continued Sergeant Farrell.
"Transient crews come in and everything is coordinated for them ahead of time and they're ready to go because we're talking to each other before they even get here."

In addition to making things move faster and more efficiently, combining the three agencies has had another benefit.

"Before the move, our controllers would talk to each other for a 12-hour shift, dealing with the same person daily, but would not have ever seen that person or be able to recognize them," said Lieutenant Todd. "Now, we're almost like family. We've put faces with names and voices. To top it off, we've dropped delays by about 90 percent."

## **Desert** Events -

#### Today:

Latin Night 7 p.m. Meditation 5 a.m. Abs Class 6 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

#### Saturday:

Hip Hop Night 8 p.m. Abs class 5 a.m. 5k run 3 p.m. Tae Kwon Do 6 p.m.

#### Sunday:

Ping pong 7 p.m. Meditation 5 a.m.

**Abs Class** 6 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

#### Monday:

Halo 8 p.m. Meditation 5 a.m. Abs Class 6 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

#### Tuesday:

Black Jack 7 p.m. Abs class 5 a.m. Tae Kwon Do 6 p.m. Bujinkan 7 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Pool tourney 8 p.m. Meditation 5 a.m. Abs class 6 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

#### Thursday:

Bingo 8 p.m. Abs class 5 a.m. Tae Kwon Do 6 p.m. Bujinkan 7 p.m.

All events in black are held at the Flex Facility. All events in gold are fitness center competitions.

# Chapel Schedule

#### Sunday:

Catholic Mass – 8 a.m. Inspirational Service – 10 a.m. Traditional Protestant -11:30 a.m. LDS – 1 p.m. Lutheran Communion – 3 p.m. Gospel Service – 5 p.m.

#### Monday:

Catholic Mass – 7 a.m. Praise Team - 7:30 p.m.

#### **Tuesday:**

Open Prayer – 6 a.m. Catholic Mass – 7 a.m. Bible Study – 7 p.m. Gospel Choir – 8 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Catholic Mass – 11 a.m. Praise Team - 7:30 p.m. Flightline Service – 11 p.m.



#### Thursday:

Open Prayer – 6 a.m. Catholic Mass - 7 a.m. Bible Study – 7 p.m.

#### Friday:

Catholic Mass – 7 a.m. AA Meeting – 2 p.m. Jewish Sabbath – 5 p.m. Wiccan – 6:30 p.m. Gospel Choir – 8 p.m.

#### Saturday:

Catholic Mass – 8 p.m.

#### Movies

#### Today: New AAFES movie I, Robot 10 p.m.

Saturday:

King Arthur 8 p.m. Anchorman 10 p.m.

#### Sunday:

Hero 8 p.m. Open Water 10 p.m.

#### Monday:

Exorcist 8 p.m. Bourne Supremacy 10 p.m.

**Tuesday:** Without A Paddle 8 p.m. New AAFES movie 10 p.m.

#### Wednesday:

Troy 8 p.m. The Village 10 p.m.

#### Thursday:

King Arthur 8 p.m. New AAFES movie 10 p.m.

#### Dec. 24:

Christmas movies

Note: Times subject to change



Courtesy photos

#### Safety photo contest

These photos have one minor safety violation each. If you can name the violations and the Instruction or Air Force Occupational Safety and Health Standard they come from you can win a safety T-shirt. The first five correct responders to e-mail safety will win.



#### Last week's photos, contest winners



Courtesy photos

The Airman above needs gloves according to AFI 91-46.

The winners from last week's contest are as follows: Tech. Sgt. Edward Krisher. Senior Airman Chris Birdwell, Master Sgt. Terry Shook, Staff Sgt. Bradley Williams and Staff Sgt. Aaron Lacey.



According to AFI 91-46, seatbelts are required.

#### **Activity Locations**

Oasis (Building 375): Open every day 24 hours: Morale computers, phones

#### Flex Facility:

Open every day 24 hours: Play Station 2, billiards, foosball, television, gift shop

Open for special events such as bingo, bazaar and karaoke shows Call 442-2789 to reserve the facility for special events

#### **Tent City Mirage Recreation Center:**

Open every day 24 hours: PS2, music, billiards,

foosball, ping pong, darts and sports television

#### **Rock Theater:**

Open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday Call 442-2789 for showings

#### **Rockers Reading and** Study Lounge:

Open every day 24 hours: Paperback exchange

#### **Tent City Morale** Trailer:

Open every day 24 hours: Morale phones